

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7508

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y P A R A 1 L I N E 2 (D A T E)

PASS USIA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AFSP, APER, CZ

SUBJECT: US CONGEN BRATISLAVA

1. RELUCTANTLY WE CONCLUDE, ON THE BASIS OF THE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHNOUPEK JANUARY 15, THAT PROSPECTS FOR BEING ABLE TO OPEN THE CONSULATE GENERAL IN BRATISLAVA DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, AT BEST, ARE DIM. WHILE WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT BOTH IN WASHINGTON AND IN PRAGUE, US OFFICIALS WILL BE DOING THEIR BEST TO CONVINCE THE CZECHOSLOVAKS OF THE WISDOM OF GOING AHEAD, THE MATTER HAS BECOME ENTWINED WITH OTHER ISSUES, AND IT IS REALISTIC AT THIS POINT NOT TO BE TOO OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ANY EARLY OPENING DATE.

2. OBVIOUSLY A NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS ARISE, SINCE WE HAVE ESSENTIALLY EVERYTHING ALMOST READY FOR OPENING AND MUST NOW IMPOSE A HOLD. IT IS IMPERATIVE NOT TO ALLOW THE BUILDING TO SLIP BACK INTO DISREPAIR. WE WILL BE IN COMMUNICATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT ABOUT THE SPECIFICS OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS. WE ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED, HOWEVER, ABOUT THE US OFFICERS AND THEIR FAMILIES WHO ARE INVOLVED, FOR WE

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KNOW THAT THEY HAVE ALREADY ENDURED A GOOD MANY FRUSTRA-

TIONS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS.

3. WE RECOMMEND THAT IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, FSIO MICHAEL BENNETT BE ASSIGNED TO RPO VIENNA, EITHER TO FILL A VACANCY WHICH MAY BE COMING UP OR ABOVE COMPLEMENT. THIS WOULD PERMIT HIM TO FOLLOW CLOSELY--AND TO CONTRIBUTE TO--THE PROGRAM FOR WHICH HE HAS BEEN TRAINED, AND FACILITATE HIS EVENTUAL MOVE TO BRATISLAVA, WE HOPE IN SOME NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE. A HOLD-THE-LINE PROGRAM LEVEL IN PRAGUE, PLUS A TIGHT HOUSING SITUATION, ARGUES AGAINST THE BENNETTS REMAINING IN PRAGUE PENDING A MOVE TO BRATISLAVA. IF VIENNA IS NOT FEASIBLE, PERHAPS SOME OTHER POST IN EE WOULD BE ON AN INTERIM BASIS PENDING THE OPENING OF BRATISLAVA. WE HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED BY BENNETT'S PERFORMANCE IN SLOVAKIA, AND BELIEVE USIA WOULD DO WELL TO TRY TO KEEP USING HIS TALENTS IN THIS AREA.

4. WITH REGARD TO JOHN DENNIS AND JACQUES KLEIN, WE ASSUME THE DEPARTMENT WILL BE CONFERRING WITH THEM ABOUT THE BEST NEXT MOVES FOR THEM. THERE IS A TEMPTATION FOR US TO BE OPTIMISTIC AND SAY PERHAPS THINGS WILL WORK OUT SOON, BUT WE REALIZE THAT THEY HAVE SERIOUS CAREER INTERESTS AT STAKE, AND IN ALL FAIRNESS WE CANNOT OFFER TOO MUCH HOPE FOR AN EARLY OPENING NOW. IF THEY CAN BE KEPT IN POSITION TO MOVE TO BRATISLAVA ON RELATIVELY SHORT NOTICE, WITHOUT HARMING THEIR CAREER INTERESTS, THAT WOULD BE IDEAL; BUT IT IS PROBABLY TOO MUCH TO ASK.

5. THE EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO BE OF ASSISTANCE TO ALL THREE IF THERE IS ANYTHING WE CAN DO. ONE POSSIBILITY TO KEEP IN MIND MAY BE ASSIGNMENTS TO PRAGUE WHEN JOBS OPEN UP (E.G. PERHAPS BENNETT VICE KNZER IN 1976).
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